

Recycled

Charlotte Cooper

Here's your explanation

I'm getting older, I'm really noticing myself ageing. It sounds a lot worse than it is.

Look, I've been making zines for a long time, and reading them for even longer. I've never really stopped making zines, but the way I work is to do something, wring the life out of it, and then forget it (I don't treat people in the same way, just so you know). What's happened over the years is that I've amassed a mini-mountain of things that I've made. These pieces – writing, articles, drawings, zines, films, and other odds and sods – will eventually be archived but for the moment they're just here. Nobody's reading them, and they should be.

My zines are obscure and ephemeral enough as it is, but I thought I'd go back and look at my older zines and recycle some of the bits I liked best. It's my hope that other people will like them too, maybe they'll like me as a result of it all. I like being liked. I'm also doing this so that I can have something to show at the forthcoming London Zine Symposium, where I'll be speaking at the end of May. I've included some forgotten bits, some bits that were never published, some new bits, and some bits that I've rewritten. Old and new.

If you like this, you might like to read more of my stuff.

CharlotteCooper.net

My ancient website has pages about my zines and lots of my writing.
www.charlottecooper.net

Obesity Timebomb

My blog about fat also has pages about forthcoming events, a more-or-less full list of publications, and some interviews with me about my zine-making history and practice.

www.obesitytimebomb.blogspot.com

Kink

This is a kinky queer sex blog, a resurrected version of an old paper zine I used to produce.

www.kinkzine.blogspot.com

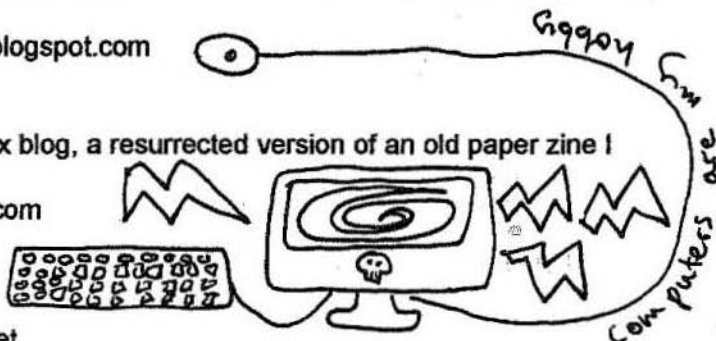
Charlotte Cooper

5.10

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I like mail and making new friends. You can always talk to me on the devil's Facebook too.

Thanks to Simon and Erica for encouraging me to make zines in the beginning, and thanks to you for reading me.



The 1-2-3s

(Any Woman Can Be A Lesbian 8.04)



The 1-2-3s are a pretend band consisting of me, my girlfriend Kay Hyatt and my boyfriend Simon Murphy. We decided to call ourselves the 1-2-3s because there are three of us and we are a funny little queer group. Family is a loaded term, but I guess that's what we are. We're a pretend band because although Simon and I have been in proper groups before, pretending is a lot less hassle.

Neither Kay nor I can play our instruments and we have no intention of practising or learning musical craft in order to become proper musicians. Simon showed us the easiest way of making a note or a chord. He removed all the strings on the guitar that I didn't need and tuned the remainder to the same note so that I can play by sliding two fingers up and down the neck. Kay plays all her notes on one string. We put pieces of tape saying A, D and E onto the instruments so we'd know where to put our fingers. We're happy with that. Kay plays a comedy bass shaped like an apple because she likes how it looks bouncing on her tummy. Everyone looks good wearing a guitar.

We used to sing along in the car to a dyke folk song called 'View From Gay Head', which was written by Alix Dobkin and recorded in the 70s by Lavender Jane. It has the unforgettable chorus: "Lesbian, lesbian, any woman can be a lesbian". We sang along to this song so often that we decided it would be the song we sang if we ever had a band. So that's our song. We are a pretend band because we don't have a repertoire of songs, we don't write songs, we have no plans to do that. We play one song, someone else's song, a song we really like. We will probably only perform it once to an audience.

We asked our friends at Homocrime if we could come and play our song, and they said yes. So we've spent the last few weeks practising the song in our basement, getting ready for our performance. When Big Brother was on we'd practise for an hour and then come and watch the latest episode together. The dog sits on a rug at our feet as we sing and play together. These have been very happy times.

Untitled

(Dead 10.00)



I thought they were sleeping but their little furry bodes were too still and too flat inside the cold cage. I really didn't understand this. I pulled one out and it was limp in my hand. I had neglected them, they had frozen or starved to death and it was all my fault.

We got some more.

Untitled
(Norge 7.01)

The Media Thule is a cabin, a living sculpture, part of Artscape Nordland, an art trail that covers thousands of miles across northern Norway up in the Arctic Circle.

To visit the Media Thule you drive for twenty miles along a single track bumpy broken road. You fly past an area restricted by the army for shooting practise, past an empty quarry where two bust up caravans sit. You keep going, you can't imagine this place could be so far from anywhere. You get to a collection of houses, wood and concrete painted rusty red, mustard, deep rich blue, washing flying on a line, orchard, tractor, church. You stop at a clearing with a sign that points up a vague path up a hill through a wood. Later you will treasure your bruises as a memory of this place, but right now you get out of your car and you stumble up, up, up across lumps of granite that scrape you, over soft pale moss that squelches with soaked up water, and dry mud that will remind you where you've been when you find it caked to your shoe. Birds sing startled songs. You are nowhere, following red-painted guide sticks, you want to give up when your beloved companion runs ahead and shouts: "It's here!"

In your dreams you will come back to this place again and again.

The cabin sits alone overlooking the fjord. It's rough on the outside and pure within. You can go inside, it's not locked. There are shelves holding files full of kid's drawings. Clean wood, warmth everywhere, there are no rules. There is a long desk, stools on which to sit, paper and worn-down coloured pencils. It is very quiet and still. You can draw. You can read. You can look at the ships in the distance, tiny shapes chugging to the other side and then back again. You can listen to your own breath. You can think any thought. You can look at the drawings on the wall, children's pictures of flowers and fish, funny-looking people, Christmas trees, Easter eggs, letters and poems thanking god for peace and life. You see yourself as a humble witness to this tiny speck of goodness in the world. There is no god, I'm sure of that, but you have found beauty, sacred wonder, you are right in it and you feel it within you.



kick out the jams

Untitled

(Fuck 4.98)



And then I pull on my stinky knickers and socks from the night before, and now my clothes seem inappropriate in the daylight. Sometimes I'll sit and drink tea and have a smoke, sometimes I'll run a little bath in someone else's tub, but I never feel clean or soaked enough as I do back at home. We might have a kiss and a hug goodbye and then I open the door and walk out into the sunshine and back to my real life.

My legs feel unsteady, strange muscles ache, my hole hurts, I'm all bruised and ripped-up inside. I wince as I lower myself onto the bus seat/onto the train seat. I look at other people and I've forgotten my manners and maybe I stare a bit too long but I'm wondering if they live a life that is anything like mine. I wish that they could know me by looking into my face. I'm greasy and tired, and I have a delicious secret. I stop and buy myself some orange juice, flowers, a trashy mag.

So I get in and have a shit (ow, painful arse, painful cunt) and read my mail on the bog. I dump my clothes and check my body in the mirror for new hickies and bite marks and welts. I put on a record and dance, and when the music has finished I sit down on my settee, then pick up my legs, then let my head roll back, and rest my eyes, I'm just resting my eyes, and then I have a little nap.

Or maybe it's time to get on with my day with prickles on the back of my neck and a warm ooze between my legs whenever I think of you.

Untitled

(Spice 6.97)



Do you like those spicy girls? What are they called? Ginger Baby Posh Sporty Scary? Micky Keithy Brian Billy Charlie? Sleepy Grumpy Happy Sneezy Dopey? Shorty Smelly Speccy Spotty Fatty? Creepy Sickie Fuckie Sweaty Junky? Chinky Whitey Darky Paki Spiccy? Dykey Tranny Bitchy Faggy Slutty? Licky Sucky Sexy Pussy Titty? They make good music. They are pretty girls.



Nobody But Me by The Human Beinz, 1967 from Three Boastful Songs
(Sing 3.03)

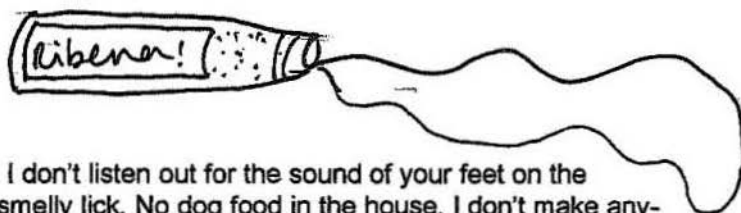
The singer may repeat the word "No" more times than is strictly necessary, but it's not a negative song in any way. I like the strange tremulous Human Beinz version best. It's hard to sing all the Nos in one breath but it's great to shout out the names of the dances, which I usually get in the wrong order.

Nobody can do the shing-a-ling like I do
Nobody can do the skate like I do
Nobody can do the boogaloo like I do
Nobody can do the Philly like I do



You can't help but feel your ego swell when you're singing along to the song's triumphant climax in the car at the top of your voice, mere seconds before you drive underneath an articulated lorry at 80 miles per hour and die from instant decapitation.

Dog Funeral
(never published 4.06)



Life without you is weird. I don't listen out for the sound of your feet on the kitchen floor. There's no smelly lick. No dog food in the house. I don't make anyone walk faster because there's a chance that you may do a poo somewhere awkward. I don't spend so much of my life flinching and moving out of the way of the powerhouse of dog that was you.

I miss you, we all do, there is a lot to miss, but it's time to say goodbye now and let you out of the bag, off the lead, so that the ghost and the memory of you can run and run and play and chase and bite and chew the logs forever. We won't call you, you can keep going as much as you like, the excitement will never stop, it'll never be time to come back on the lead and be still and alone again.

This is your home now and we'll always remember you whenever we are here, you'll always be in our hearts because we love you, and maybe you'll come and visit us in our dreams sometime, run through our heads and trample us with your paws, snuggle up in the middle, sneak in. I hope so.

The fuck away from my car!



On This Day:

(Love 8.97, remade for this zine 5.10)

On this day the sun will shine, everything out the back will be in bloom even if it's the wrong time of the year. Birdies will tweet, foxes will stretch out and loaf. The bag ends that my neighbours chuck into my garden will flutter themselves away and into a bin. I'll have a letter in my hand from High Risk, saying that they are publishing transgressive queer literature again and that they want to get their hands on my stuff.

Walking through the flat I'll find the front room filled with all my most cherished friends who just popped by for a visit and decided to stay awhile. We'll all do turns to amuse each other, everybody will be completely on form and we'll laugh so hard that we'll all pee ourselves a little and blush and it won't matter. Our faces will hurt from laughing, our sides will ache, and I won't cough through it because I won't have asthma any more.

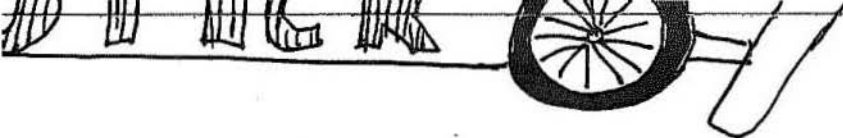
Everyone I fancy will be here and they'll all tell me how gorgeous I am. I'll be able to stop time for a bit so that we can go and have fantastic sex without interrupting the mood of the party, we'll be gluttons of surrender and feral lust. No one will care about being cool, if there's love we'll just abandon ourselves to it without anyone thinking it's weird.

Simon's hair will be wild and curly and free, he'll look like a golden god, elemental. Kay will be a sharp-dressed man, she'll be absorbed in a game with her excellent dog. Our families will have been magically transformed into people who care about us. And Mum and Paul will be alive again and they'll sit in the sunlight and tell me that they've been watching me live my life, and that they are very proud of me. Andy will be here, and Berta and Brixton; everyone. We will all dance to our absolute favourite records, god they'll sound so fuckn great, all of us will dance amazingly and we'll all be so beautiful. We will kick out the jams together, motherfuckers.

And we'll all have presents: free passes to the drag strip, trips to the moon, as much life as we want. The most excellent tattoos will just WHAP! themselves onto our bodies instantly without any scabbing. We'll eat our favourite things: artichoke hearts, six foot dosas, cream puffs, raspberries, and there'll be no washing up. Michelle Tea, Ann Rower, Agnès Varda and Jonathan Richman will turn up to shower us with their new books and films and music, which they have created with us in mind. And if you have a thought that thrills you, that makes you feel alive, you will know exactly how to act on it and to make it come true

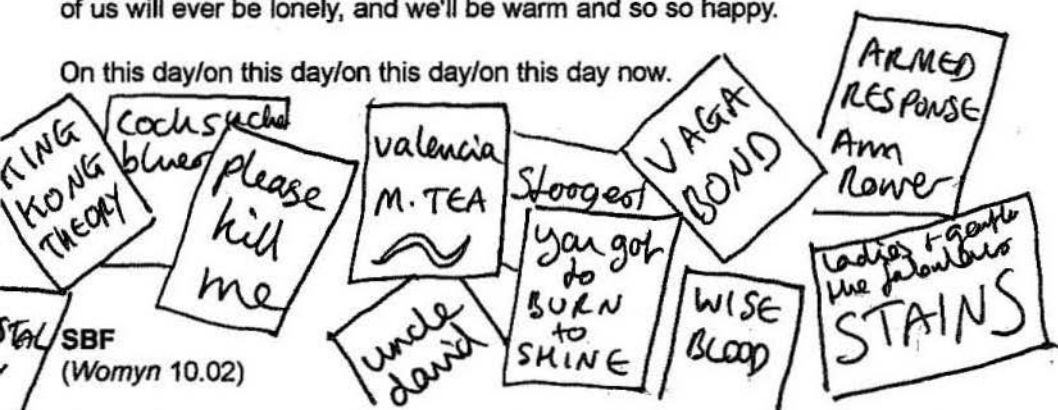
Someone will turn on the radio to hear a president or a prime minister saying: "There will never be another war, we're sick of it, we want to try to get on so from now on there will only be peace, the rich will give to the poor, it will be fair, we'll

Bob
Boy



sort out the climate and the corporations, everyone is going to be alright now": And if you stick your head out of the window you will hear the whole planet cheering because there will be no more bullying or self-righteousness, no one will ever be oppressed or ashamed ever again. And every stab of unwanted pain in the world will have evaporated. And we'll all drink fabulous cocktails. And we'll never have to worry about paying for something, money won't matter any more, we'll never have to be anxious about anything. And we'll all be healthy, and none of us will ever be lonely, and we'll be warm and so so happy.

On this day/on this day/on this day/on this day now.



We call them Smacked Bum Faces. They are the women who never smile at you, who go around in a gang, and when you say something apparently innocent, they pull you up on your pathetic love of sexism and racism, or your obvious devotion to capitalism. They have bad dye jobs. They have an income, some nice little right-on part time job somewhere. They make jokes that aren't funny just to prove they have a sense of humour. They support political positions that are at least twenty years out of date, and they make a virtue of it. They are invariably white and have been to university. People go mad trying to crack them, to get in with them, to be their friends. They are righteous footsoldiers for feminism.

Little Lovesex Poem Thing* (Love 8.97)



Just wanna remember it cruise on it it was so good I knew it was at the time I wanted to soak it up remember it taste it all. I got my hand in her and she did sigh and I got her breast in my mouth and it was so good, and she was beautiful, and she woke up and kissed me and I will not let little nagging doubts and fears creep in was I ok is she attracted to me is it ok for me to call will she see me again what's going to happen? I am just going to remember that it was good and that I know she loved it too.

* this is about my girlfriend, I wrote it when I first met her. Shhh, she doesn't know.

